

**PAGES MISSING IN  
THIS BOOK, XI TO xiv**

**TIGHT BINDING BOOK**

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY

**OU\_164248**

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY







# SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

BY  
MATTHEW ARNOLD

WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES, ETC., BY  
EGERTON SMITH, M.A.  
DACCA COLLEGE

NEW IMPRESSION

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.  
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON  
FOURTH AVENUE & 30TH STREET, NEW YORK  
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS

1916

*First published 1913*

## PREFACE

*Sohrab and Rustum* is usually read at an age when students may be expected to study not merely the substance of a poem but also its form, including both structure and style, and its imaginative colouring. Considerable attention has therefore been bestowed in the introduction and notes upon the literary characteristics of the poem, and an attempt has been made to encourage its study in the light of general literary principles.

With a view to the requirements of Indian students some information has been given which the English student would know, or could find out for himself. Much of this has, however, been set apart in a Glossary.

July 1913.

DACCA COLLEGE.





SOHRAB AND RUSTUM  
AN EPISODE

# CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	ix
§ 1. Types of Epic Poetry - - - - -	ix
§ 2. Epic Qualities of <i>Sohrab and Rustum</i> - - - - -	xii
§ 3. The Story of Sohrab and Rustum - - - - -	xvi
§ 4. Arnold's Treatment of the Story - - - - -	xviii
§ 5. Other Versions of the Story - - - - -	xx
§ 6. Arnold's Literary Principles - - - - -	xxi
§ 7. General Characteristics of Style - - - - -	xxvii
§ 8. Structure of the Plot - - - - -	xxviii
§ 9. The Similes - - - - -	xxx
§ 10. Repetitions and Archaisms - - - - -	xxxv
§ 11. The Metre - - - - -	xxxv
ANALYSIS OF THE POEM - - - - -	4
SOHRAB AND RUSTUM - - - - -	5
NOTES - - - - -	31
GLOSSARY - - - - -	46
INDEX OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES - - - - -	48
INDEX OF NAMES OF PERSONS - - - - -	50
INDEX OF TRIBAL NAMES - - - - -	51
MAP - - - - -	53

# INTRODUCTION

## §I.—TYPES OF EPIC POETRY.

POETRY may roughly be divided into two kinds: (a) Subjective poetry—in which the poet expresses his own feelings and thoughts, *e.g.*, Lyric poetry. (b) Objective poetry in which the poet represents things that exist, or events that happen, outside himself. Descriptive poetry tries to represent in words the perceptible qualities of natural objects. Narrative poetry finds its material in external events; it relates actions.

The most important form of narrative poetry is the Epic. Epic is the name given to that “species of poetic . . . composition, represented typically by the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which celebrates in the form of a continuous narrative the achievements of one or more heroic personages of history or tradition”. (*New English Dictionary*.) Its name, derived from the Greek *Epos*, ‘a word,’ indicates that it is to be distinguished from Lyric as something said or told and not sung.

There are two distinct types of epic—(1) the primitive epic, or epic of growth, and (2) the imitative or artificial epic.

Amongst the earliest forms of poetry were rough hymns in praise of tribal gods or heroes, sung by the clan in chorus to the accompaniment of a simple dance.<sup>1</sup> These would be gradually supplemented and finally almost

<sup>1</sup> Probably similar in structure to the Vedic hymns, though doubtless more crude. The *Rig-Veda* illustrates the gradual growth of the narrative element; for instance, ‘when Indra is extolled or invoked, a reference is not infrequently made to the achievements of the God, his wrestling with the thunder-storm, or some similar deed’.—Jireczek, *Deutsche Heldensage*, trans. Bentinck Smith. (Dent & Co.)

displaced by recitals of the deeds of the heroes ; first by mere allusion, later by actual narration of their exploits. The songs became legendary rather than hymnic ; the narrative element increased while the choral or lyric element decreased.

As writing was not yet invented these lays would be memorised and handed on by one professional minstrel to another. Many would gather about the figure of some great national hero, including some that were not originally connected with him. The legendary material thus provided and preserved by oral tradition would be worked up into a complex narrative whole and given a definite structural unity by some great bard. ' Detached lays of an episodic character mark the first step '. ' It would be the work of minstrels, priests, and poets, as the national spirit grew conscious of itself to shape all these materials into a definite body of tradition. This is the rule of development—first scattered stories, then the union of these into a *national legend* '.<sup>1</sup>

This artistic whole might then be supplemented, modified, polished, more imaginatively coloured by one or more later bards before finally it was committed to writing in a later age.

This is the true epic, or as it may be called to distinguish it from a later development, the primitive epic or epic of growth.

Examples are the Old English epic, *Beowulf*, the German *Nibelungenlied*, the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana* (although these have much didactic interpolation). The greatest of all are the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* ; but it is slightly misleading to apply the term ' primitive ' to these epics, which show a high artistic unity of structure, as well as a fineness in detail, that could only have been the work of a great poetic genius.

<sup>1</sup> Butcher & Lang, *The Odyssey of Homer*. (Macmillan & Co.)

is not large in scale. Matthew Arnold said of the epic in general that 'it treats of one great complex action in a grand style, and with fulness of detail'. His poem, however, treats only of one event, and therefore is only an epic incident, or as he called it, an episode. It might also be called an epic in miniature.

Again, it is not national; the heroes are oriental, but the poet is English. The events are those of an age over two thousand years before Arnold's century. It is then a literary revival, and belongs to the artificial or imitative type of epic. Its material is taken from an epos which Arnold came to know, not by tradition, but by reading.

In his general method of treatment too Matthew Arnold is imitative; he deliberately took Homer as his model, not merely in structure, but in the details of style, especially similes; and he frequently copies even particular images and expressions. (*Cf.* notes on lines 111 and 735 for examples.) For evidence of the influence of Milton (apart from the similes and repetitions) see the notes on lines 114, 115, and 277. It is also to be noted that Arnold makes use of many words that are now obsolete or not in ordinary use in order to give an archaic appearance. For a list of these, see p. xxxv.

One further limitation must be made: Arnold's poem does not bear what Shelley called 'a defined and intelligible relation to the knowledge and sentiment and religion of the age in which he lived'. Save in an incidental way there is in his characters no reflection of the life and forms of thought of his own time; in the few places where modern ideas break through they are distinctly obtruded and are out of harmony with the general tone of the poem.

## §3.—THE STORY OF SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.

The Tartars (or Turanians) and Persians were, as usual, at war. At the time of this episode (c. 600 B.C.) the King of Iran (or Persia) was Kai-Kaus, who, according to Firdausi, was a foolish and luxurious tyrant. The chief command of his armies was given to a great hero, Rustum, renowned for his strength and warlike valour.

Rustum had married Tahmineh, daughter of the Turanian king of Samengan in Ader-baijan, but soon left her for the active life of war. A son was born, Sohrab, who grew up with remarkable strength and skill in arms. When he learnt of the glorious deeds of his great father Sohrab was fired with an overmastering desire to find Rustum and emulate his feats. Accordingly he set forth to war against Kai-Kaus and conquer Iran for his father. Then together they would overrun Turan as well.

Afrasiab, King of the Turanians, and therefore a natural enemy of Persia, helped him with an army and treasure, thinking that Rustum, the bulwark of Persia, might thus be destroyed by the younger hero, and that when Persia was helpless they could easily put Sohrab out of the way, and he himself would be master both of Iran and of Turan. Haman the commander of the Tartar army was instructed by Afrasiab to prevent Sohrab from discovering the identity of Rustum, and Rustum from knowing that Sohrab was his son ; <sup>1</sup>

‘ For this bold youth must not his father know  
Each must confront the other as his foe . . .  
Unknown the youth shall Rustum’s force withstand,  
And soon o’erwhelm the bulwark of the land ’.

The Turanians marched on Persia, and Sohrab defeated and took prisoner a famous warrior Hujir, and captured

<sup>1</sup> Rustum had been told by Tahmineh that their issue was a daughter, because she was afraid lest her son should be taken away to be trained in war.

the strong frontier fortress. The report of Sohrab's deeds was carried to the Persian king, and he in alarm sent to call Rustum to his aid. After feasting the envoys lavishly Rustum at length appeared, but when Kaus, enraged at the delay, threatened him with impalement, he taunted the king with his folly and weakness, and departed in anger. The warrior Gudurz however was sent to appease him, and a reconciliation was effected.

Rustum went to spy out the Tartar camp, and on his return described the appearance of Sohrab :

In stature perfect, as the cypress tree,  
No Tartar ever boasted such a presence . . .  
Seeing his form, thou would's't at once declare  
That he is Sam, the warrior ; so majestic  
In mien and action.

Sohrab challenged Kaus to single combat, but the king discreetly declined ; and Rustum at length was prevailed upon to take up the challenge, insisting however on fighting under a feigned name, ' a usage ', says Malcolm, ' not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days '.

Rustum on the first day feeling pity for Sohrab's youth proposed that they should part in friendship, and Sohrab thinking that the noble mien of his opponent could belong to none but his glorious father asked if he were not Rustum. Rustum, however, denied this. After fighting with spear, sword, mace, bow and arrow, and wrestling, they parted for the night, the advantage being with Sohrab.

Sohrab was assured by Haman that his antagonist was not Rustum, but an instinctive feeling of affection rose in his heart, and on the second day he renewed Rustum's proposal that they should sit together in peace. Rustum refused in anger, and in the wrestling that followed was worsted, but saved his life by an appeal to the chivalry



of Sohrab, claiming the benefit of an alleged Persian custom that required the victor in a first contest to spare his antagonist for a second trial; 'a chief may fight till he is twice overthrown'.

On the third day Rustum gained the advantage in wrestling and immediately stabbed Sohrab with his dagger. When Sohrab declared that Rustum, his father, would avenge his death, the aged hero recognised his mistake, which was proved by the amulet that he had given Tahmineh to bind on the arm of any son that might be born. Consumed with remorse, Rustum flung himself on the ground and covered his head with dust.

According to Sohrab's wishes the armies departed in peace, and he was buried in Seistan with his ancestors.

Tahmineh was distracted with grief and set fire to her palace, meaning to perish in the flames, but was prevented by her attendants. She refused all consolation, taking only a melancholy joy in cherishing her son's horse, arms, and armour.

Till one long year had passed—then welcome death  
Released her from the heavy load of life,  
The pressure of unmitigated woe.

This is, in rough outline, the story of Sohrab as it is given in the *Shah Nameh*, or Book of Kings, the great epic written by the Persian poet Firdausi in the tenth century, A.D. And this is, in the main, the version that Matthew Arnold followed in his poem.

#### §4.—ARNOLD'S TREATMENT OF THE STORY.

The most important points of divergence in detail between stories given by Arnold and by Firdausi are mentioned in the notes. See notes on lines 29, 85 (and 223), 150, 347-63, 520, and 659.

Arnold's change was, in general, one of compression ; and undoubtedly he has succeeded in making the incidents much more impressive to modern readers, in proportion as they are less long drawn out. For instance the three days of fighting have been reduced to one ; in fact the whole action is contained within dawn and sunset of one day. This concentration of interest in the crisis of the poem removes the tedium of the story as it is told in strictly chronological order, and certainly leads to a gain in effectiveness.

His interest however was more in the situation than in the action, in representing the feelings and thoughts of Sohrab and Rustum rather than their deeds. In Firdausi the conversation after the fatal blow is relatively unimportant, but in Arnold's poem this receives considerable attention.

As might have been expected of one in whose poems introspection or psychological analysis is so prominent a factor, he bestowed much more care on the motivation of the action ; see lines 243-59 and 345-63. He notes the finer shades of character (lines 380-97, 427-47) ; and the subtler workings of the mind when under stress of various feelings and emotions—anger, suspicion, affection, hope, despair, grief (lines 457-69, 345-63, 589-60, 694-7, 340-4, 698-705, 616-40).

It is significant that what most readers would pick out as the finest part of *Sohrab and Rustum* is the concluding passage with its sublime contrast, which has many parallels in Arnold's lyrical poems, between all the turmoil, the futile hurry, and the weariness of the busy world of men, and the calm self-dependence of nature. And this, too, in face of his own theory that actions form the true subject matter of poetry. The truth is that the subjective attitude was so dominant in Arnold's mental life that he could not prevent the intrusion of his

own thoughts even in a deliberately objective poem. (*Cf.* note to line 824.) He followed the bent of his own genius, and in his poem the story is, for better or worse, intellectualised.

### §5.—OTHER VERSIONS OF THE STORY.

This story of a mortal conflict between father and son has its analogues in the legends of several other Aryan peoples.

A similar incident is found in several versions in old Celtic literature, *e.g.*, the Irish *Aided Conlaoich* (Death of Conlaech). The Irish hero Cuchulain had been in Scotland, or rather Skye, learning feats of arms from the Amazon Scathach, and after his return a son was born to him by her daughter Aiffe, whom he had left behind. He had left a ring to be given to the child, with injunctions never to reveal his name or parentage to a stranger. Some years later the youth Conlaech sought his father in Ireland. They met unknown, and Conlaech, after refusing to tell his name, was killed (though only by one trick of arms that he did not know) by his father in single combat. All too late Cuchulain saw the ring and recognised his horrible deed, and his affection for his son breaks out in a pathetic lament.

One of the earliest relics of German literature is the Ostrogothic *Hildebrandslied*. Hildebrand, the aged instructor in arms of Dietrich (Theodoric), had accompanied his master into exile amongst the Huns. Years later he led a Hunnish army into Italy. He was opposed on the frontier by his son Hadubrand. Not knowing each other they determined on a single combat. The older man asked his opponent's name and parentage, and on being told 'Hadubrand, son of Hildebrand', vowed that

he was his father, and offered him bracelets of gold. But Hudubrand refused these in scorn, thinking that this was only some cunning trick to avoid the fight, or to entice him nearer the reach of Hildebrand's spear; for he had heard that his father had died in battle. Hildebrand could not endure these taunts, and knowing that both armies would scorn him as a coward, he cried out in despair against the fate that doomed him, when he returned after thirty years' wandering, either to slay or to be slain by his own son. They engaged in mortal combat, fighting first with spears, then with swords, and (as we learn from other sources—for the poem is a fragment) Hildebrand slew his son.

### §6.—ARNOLD'S LITERARY PRINCIPLES.

In *Sohrab and Rustum*, in *Tristram and Iseult*, and in *Balder Dead* Arnold goes to the past for his subject-matter. In his method of treatment too he followed the models of classical Greek literature. Both in his choice of subject-matter and in his method of treatment he was following a deliberate theory. This theory was stated in the Author's Preface to the poems of 1853.

He asks 'What are the situations, from the representation of which {no poetical enjoyment can be derived?} They are {those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. When they occur in actual life, they are painful, not tragic; the representation of them in poetry is painful also'.

Because it belonged to this class of situations, painful without relief, and dealt with thought rather than action,

he excluded from the edition of 1853 his previously written poem, *Empedocles on Etna*.<sup>1</sup>

Some critics, however, believe that 'the Poet who would really fix the public attention must leave the exhausted past, and draw his subjects from matters of present import'. This view Arnold considers to be false. He asks 'What are the eternal objects of Poetry, among all nations, and at all times? They are actions; human actions; possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the Poet'.

'The Poet, then, has in the first place to select an excellent action; and what actions are the most excellent? Those, certainly, which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections; to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time. These feelings are permanent and the same; that which interests them is permanent and the same also. The modernness or antiquity of an action, therefore, has nothing to do with its fitness for poetical representation; this depends upon its inherent qualities. To the elementary part of our nature, to our passions, that which is great and passionate is eternally interesting; and interesting solely in proportion to its greatness and to its passion.

'Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, Dido—what modern poem presents personages as interesting, even to

<sup>1</sup> In it he had intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers who had lived on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun to change and modern habits of thought and feeling were showing themselves. 'What those who are familiar only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics, have disappeared; the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared; the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust'.

us moderns, as these personages of an "exhausted past". We have the domestic epic dealing with the details of modern life which pass daily under our eyes ; we have poems representing modern personages in contact with the problems of modern life, moral, intellectual, and social ; these works have been produced by poets the most distinguished of their nation and time ; yet I fearlessly assert that *Hermann and Dorothea*, *Childe Harold*, *The Excursion*, leave the reader cold in comparison with the effect produced upon him by the latter books of the *Iliad*, by the *Oresteia*, or by the episode of Dido. And why is this ? Simply because in the three latter cases the action is greater, the personages nobler, the situations more intense : and this is the true basis of the interest in a poetical work, and this alone.

'It may be urged, however, that past actions may be interesting in themselves, but that they are not to be adopted by the modern Poet, because it is impossible for him to have them clearly present to his own mind, and he cannot therefore feel them deeply, nor represent them forcibly. But this is not necessarily the case. The externals of a past action, indeed, he cannot know with the precision of a contemporary ; but his business is with its essentials. The outward man of *Œdipus* or of *Macbeth*, the houses in which they lived, the ceremonies of their courts, he cannot accurately figure to himself ; but neither do they essentially concern him. His business is with their inward man ; with their feelings and behaviour in certain tragic situations, which engage their passions as men ; these have in them nothing local and casual ; they are as accessible to the modern Poet as to a contemporary.

'The date of an action, then, signifies nothing : the action itself, its selection and construction, this is what is all important. This the Greeks understood far more clearly than we do. The radical difference between their poetical

theory and ours consists, as it appears to me, in this : that, with them, the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration ; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. They regarded the whole ; we regard the parts. With them the action predominated over the expression of it ; with us, the expression predominates over the action.<sup>1</sup> 'Not that they failed in expression, or were inattentive to it ; on the contrary, they are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the *grand style* : but their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence ; because it is so simple and so well subordinated ; because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys.'

Having, then, decided on his material, Arnold will, in order to learn the essentials of poetic art, sit at the feet of the Greeks. They are 'the best models of instruction for the individual writer'. 'Clearness of arrangement, rigour of development, simplicity of style . . . these may be learned best from the ancients, who although infinitely less suggestive than Shakespeare, are thus, to the artist, more instructive.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Arnold does not wish the Poet to limit himself in his choice of subjects to the period of Greek and Roman antiquity. 'I only counsel him to choose for his subject great actions, without regarding to what time they belong. Nor do I deny that the poetic faculty can and does manifest itself in treating the most trifling action. But it is a pity that power should be wasted ; and that the Poet should be compelled to impart interest and force to his subject, instead of receiving them from it, and thereby doubling his impressiveness—' *Advertisement to Second Edition.*

<sup>2</sup> Compare what he says elsewhere : 'In a sincere endeavour to learn and practise amid the confusion of our times what is sound and true in poetic art, I seemed to myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing among the ancients'. And in the advertisement to the edition of 1854 : 'Again, with respect to the study of the

Matthew Arnold's theory is not to be accepted in its entirety. He seems to assume that excellence of subject-matter will necessarily produce excellence in treatment. 'All depends on the subject; choose a fitting action, penetrate yourself with the feeling of its situation; this done, everything else will follow.'

The story of *Sohrab and Rustum* is, as Arnold said in a letter, 'a very noble and excellent one', and full of the deep and simple elements of human feeling; and he certainly did penetrate himself with the feeling of its situation. This is a necessary preliminary, but it is not everything; for it is evident that an excellent subject may be treated worthily or unworthily. *Sohrab and Rustum* might easily have been a less fine poem; Leigh Hunt's *Story of Rimini* is not to be compared with the episode in the *Inferno* of Dante, nor with the drama by Stephen Phillips; but the inferiority is not due principally to want of feeling for the situation.

Some of Arnold's other deliberate sayings are hardly consonant with his dictum that all depends on the subject. 'The noble and profound application of ideas to life', which he considers 'the most essential part of poetic greatness', must take place 'under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth'. Again, 'to the style and manner of the best poetry their special character, their accent, is given by their diction, and, even yet more, by their movement'.

The ideal that Arnold had before him in writing *Sohrab and Rustum* was that of 'the grand style'. As an example classical writers of antiquity, it has been said that we should emulate rather than imitate them. I make no objection; all I say is, let us study them . . . . They will help to cure modern literature of its besetting sin—fantasticism. 'Sanity—that is the great virtue of the ancient literature: the want of that is the great defect of the modern, in spite of all its variety and power. It is impossible to read carefully the great ancients, without losing something of our caprice and eccentricity; and to emulate them we must at least read them'.



of what he means by the grand style he quotes Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I., 591.

His form had not yet lost  
All her original brightness, nor appeared  
Less than Archangel ruined, and the excess  
Of glory obscured.

It arises, he says, 'when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject'. Perhaps a better definition is that given by Mr. John Bailey in a paper read before the English Association. 'The Grand Style arises in poetry when a great subject is treated by the action of the imagination with severity or with a noble simplicity'. He instances Pindar. 'His subjects are not by themselves great subjects; they are the mere victories of aristocratic athletes or chariot owners; but, and this is the important point, he seldom fails so to treat them that they become great, by bringing them into relation with things of inherent poetic greatness, the august beginnings of an ancient and noble house, the connexion of the human and the divine, the eternal majesty of law and right. By the greatness of his nature and the power of his style he carries the minds of his readers far away above his patron's personal achievements, fulfilling and exalting their imagination with the vision of high things of everlasting truth and import.'

It may safely be said, then, that all does *not* depend on the subject; but that there are at least three essentials:—

- (1) Choice of a fitting action, an excellent subject;
- (2) 'high imaginative conception of the subject';
- (3) 'the compelling power of style'.

§7.—GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE  
STYLE.

‘What distinguishes the artist from the mere amateur’, says Goethe, ‘is *Architectonicè* in the highest sense ; that power of execution which creates, forms, and constitutes : not the profoundness of single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration’. (Author’s Preface.)

From what Arnold has said in his preface about the poetic art we shall expect *Sohrab and Rustum* not to be a poem that exists ‘merely for the sake of single lines and passages’, but one that depends rather on the ‘total impression’. It is great because of his ‘skill in discerning and firmly conceiving an excellent action, from his power of intensely feeling a situation, of intimately associating himself with a character’—qualities which Arnold himself notices in Shakespeare. In it his style has all ‘the severe and scrupulous self-restraint of the ancients’, and their ‘conscientious rejection of superfluities’.

Its chief merits, then, are the clearness, sympathy, and power with which the scene and action are visualised ; and the restraint and dignity of the style—its directness and simplicity, and the absence of florid ornamentation. *Sohrab and Rustum* shows in a considerable degree what Arnold pointed out as the principal qualities of Homeric style—rapidity in movement, plainness and directness in expression, directness and simplicity of thought, nobility of manner. His language is characterised by purity, lucidity, and precision ; and it very rarely fails in finish and grace.

To sum up in the words of Henry James, ‘Splendour, music, passion, breadth of movement and rhythm, we find in him in no great abundance ; what we do find is high distinction of feeling, a temperance, a kind of modesty

of expression, which is at the same time an artistic resource and a remarkable faculty for touching the chords which connect our feelings with the things that others have done and spoken '.

### §8.—STRUCTURE OF THE PLOT.

The simplest order of events for a narrative is the order of time, the order in which the events occurred. This, however, is apt to result in a very straggling tale. The epic poet does not usually give his story in strict chronological sequence, beginning from the earliest event, the birth of the hero, but plunges into the heart of the story, leaving any necessary but less interesting information to be given incidentally, either by allusions in the speeches of one or other character, or by deliberate episodes. 'He does not commence a poem on 'The Trojan War' with the birth of Helen; but hurries on to the crisis and plunges the reader into the middle of events just as if he knew all about them'. (Horace, *De Arte Poetica*, 146-9.) Thus the beginning is made more vivid and striking, and the reader's interest is secured at once.<sup>1</sup>

In actual fact the traditions on which the story of the true epic was founded were familiar to the hearers. Matthew Arnold, however, dealt with stories that were not quite so well known, and found it necessary to give this information to the reader by giving in an 'Argument' a short sketch of the plot; see his quotations from Sir John

<sup>1</sup> Homer's *Iliad* begins in the tenth year of the siege of Troy, with the anger of Achilles at being deprived of the captive maiden Briseis. Virgil's *Æneid* opens with the arrival of the Trojans at Carthage; then Æneas relates his previous history. The story of the fall of Troy occupies Books II. and III. *Paradise Lost* opens with a picture of Satan and the fallen angels lying doomed upon the burning lake of Hell. Disregarding some allusions, it is not until Books V. and VI. that the preceding events are told.

Malcolm for *Sohrab and Rustum*, from the Edda for *Balder Dead*, and from Dunlop for *Tristram and Iseult*.

The events of *Sohrab and Rustum* are told in their chronological order in the quotation from Malcolm's *History of Persia*. The poem, however, opens with the dawn of the fatal day, and Sohrab's desire for a single combat. The Persian chiefs, on being challenged, persuade Rustum to represent them; he goes forth to battle, insisting, however, on fighting unknown.

It is to be noted that in the poem

(i) such of Sohrab's previous history as is necessary for the explanation of the catastrophe is conveyed in his speech with Peran-Wisa;

(ii) Rustum's ignorance of the fact that he had a son is conveyed in the regret expressed in lines 229-30,

Would that I myself had such a son,  
And not that one slight helpless girl I have;

in his disbelief in Sohrab's statement that his father Rustum would avenge his death,

And with a cold incredulous voice he said :—  
'What prate is this of fathers and revenge?  
The mighty Rustum never had a son'.

and lastly in the poet's interpolated explanation,

For he had had sure tidings that the babe,  
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,  
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all—  
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear  
Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms.<sup>1</sup>

(iii) the burial of Sohrab in Seistan, and the cessation of hostilities between the two armies is not narrated as a fact, but as Sohrab's request and Rustum's promise.

<sup>1</sup> Arnold wishing to concentrate attention on the crisis makes these explanations very brief; he delays the action only so long as suffices to give sufficient information to enable readers to understand the plot.

After Rustum's promise Sohrab is satisfied and gives up his life. This ends the action of the poem, night comes down, and we leave Rustum alone with his son.

As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd  
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear  
His house, now 'mid their broken flights of steps  
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—  
So in the sand lay Rustum with his son.

And then Arnold, who had learnt from his Greek models the value of ending upon a quiet and subdued note, closes with the sublime picture of the majestic river flowing calmly on its course serenely regardless of the tragedy that has just been played out on its banks—a picture embodying once more his favourite contrast between the peaceful independence of nature and the pathetic futility and feverish anxieties of the life of men.

Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,  
Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,  
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,  
Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting ;  
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil,  
Labourers that shall not fail when man is gone.

### §9.—THE SIMILES OF THE POEM.

If we judge from their practice, poets seem to have considered the simile to be a form of decoration peculiarly appropriate for epic poetry.

In its simple form the simile is a figure of speech in which a comparison is made between two objects, scenes, or occurrences, which are similar in some prominent respect, although perhaps dissimilar in others. Its primary

function is to explain and illustrate by reference to something more familiar.

All the blade, like glass,  
Sprang in a thousand shivers. (ll. 511-2)  
And as afield the reapers cut a swathe  
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,  
And on each side are squares of standing corn,  
And, in the midst, a stubble, short and bare—  
So on each side were squares of men, with spears  
Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand. (ll. 293-8)

And Ruksh the horse uttered a dreadful cry ;—  
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar  
Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day  
Hath trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,  
And comes at night to die upon the sand. (ll. 501-6)

In lines 616-7—

And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide  
Of the bright rocking ocean sets to shore.

The latter part is obviously necessary in order to explain the meaning of the metaphorical phrase 'set to grief'. In poetry, however, it is usually intended to make a scene more vivid and impressive.

for like the lightning to this field  
I came, and like the wind I go away—  
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind. (ll. 722-4)

As Johnson said, 'A simile, to be perfect, must both illustrate and ennoble the subject ; must show it to the understanding in a clearer view, and display it to the fancy with greater dignity ; but either of these qualities may be sufficient to recommend it'

Even in quite simple comparisons like the following from the *Iliad*, Book IV., whose appropriateness none will

doubt, it is evident that the imagery has a beauty and fascination of its own, independent of the aptness and striking nature of the comparison.

‘As when on the echoing beach the sea-wave  
lifteth up itself in close array before the driving of  
the west wind ; out on the deep doth it first raise its  
head, and then, breaketh upon the land and belloweth  
aloud and goeth with arching crest about the pro-  
montories, and speweth the foaming brine afar ;  
even so in close array moved the battalions of the  
Danaans without pause to battle’.

Homer then notes how all the Greek host advanced in silence

‘But for the Trojans, like sheep beyond number that  
stand in the courtyard of a man of great substance,  
to be milked of their white milk, and bleat without  
ceasing to hear their lamb’s cry, even so arose the  
clamour of the Trojans through the wide host’.

Many other examples make it clear that in Homer the decorative or pictorial motive very often has outweighed the explanatory or illustrative.

Matthew Arnold, following Homer—and Milton—frequently carries this tendency to an extreme. Like Milton, as well as Homer, ‘he does not confine himself within the limits of rigorous comparison’, but elaborates the image independently of the points of similarity and introduces circumstances that are quite irrelevant to the comparison and serve only to fill the imagination ; evidently agreeing with Johnson’s dictum<sup>1</sup> that ‘in heroicks that may be admitted which ennobles though it does not illustrate’.

<sup>1</sup> Boileau, too, was of the opinion ‘that it is not at all necessary in poetry that the points of comparison should correspond exactly, but a general similarity is sufficient’.

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed  
His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,  
And show'd a sign in faint vermilion points  
Prick'd ; as a cunning workman in Pekin,  
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,  
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,  
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp  
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands—  
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd  
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal. (*ll.* 669-78)

Here lines 674-6, although they indubitably have a pictorial value of their own, play no part in the comparison. So, too, in the simile in lines 302-9, the two lines (305-6) speaking of the frosted window-panes are irrelevant to the comparison, although they certainly serve to make the picture more complete and lifelike. Again, in *l.* 317, the bubbling fountain has strictly nothing to do with Sohrab's slenderness.

Occasionally the resemblance is often of the very slightest or the most superficially, but it is developed beyond the point strictly necessary for comparison, simply for the sake of giving a vivid and beautiful picture.

And dear as the wet diver to the eyes  
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,  
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,  
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,  
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,  
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—  
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came. (*ll.* 284-90)

Here the situations are similar only in the most general way, the fear lest someone should not come and the subsequent joy at his arrival ; they are different as regards the causes of fear and in all other respects. By this simile the situation is not elucidated, yet the feeling of



suspense is enhanced. So in the simile of the eagle (ll. 556-75) the comparison is still less exact, since ignorance of their loss is the only point of similarity, but the pathos and tragic irony of the situation is certainly reinforced.

Often, however, the imagery that is irrelevant for the strict purposes of comparison is not quite *otiose*, for if it make the picture more realistic and lively the comparison will be not only so much the more impressive, but probably clearer. As Jebb says, 'if A is to be made clearer by means of B, B itself must be clearly seen; and therefore Homer takes care that B shall never remain abstract or shadowy; he invests it with enough of detail to place a concrete image before the mind. . . . The object which furnishes the simile must be made distinct before the simile itself can be effective'. (*Homer*, p. 28.)

Amongst the finest similes of *Sohrab and Rustum* I would place the two in lines 154-69, where the imagery is not only apt for the comparison and without superfluity, but has a beauty and striking effectiveness of its own, which is enhanced by the felicity and noble directness of expression that is characteristic of Arnold at his best.

Furthermore, they fill a natural pause in the story, when the action is, as it were held in suspense. Here, therefore, as in lines 291-318, the similes are altogether in place. But whether a simile expanded to the length of six lines is fitly introduced into the description of a club-stroke (ll. 408-16) is very doubtful; it distinctly delays the movement, which, in this place at least, ought to be rapid. As Jebb pointed out, (*Homer*, p. 26) 'the Homeric simile is not a mere ornament. It serves to introduce something which Homer desires to render exceptionally impressive—some moment, it may be, of peculiarly intense action—some sight, or sound, full of wonder, or terror, or pity—in a word, something *great*'.

## § 10.—REPETITIONS AND ARCHAISMS.

The principal **repetitions** in *Sohrab and Rustum* are in lines 11, 12, and 16; 49, 50-1, 75-6, 177 and 216, 269, 279, 335, 377, 400, 406, 612 and 615, 647-8, 784-94 and 799-805. Repetition of some phrase of his own coinage is a favourite practice of Arnold in his prose writings; 'sweetness and light' and 'high seriousness' are only two of many examples.

The principal **archaisms** are: frore (l. 115), sate (l. 199 and frequently), helm (264), atop (268), dight and broider'd (277), tale (288), wrack (414), shore (497), anon (561), oped (698), betwixt (719), writ (725).

## § 11.—THE METRE.

Matthew Arnold's two narrative poems, *Sohrab and Rustum* and *Balder Dead*, and parts of *Tristram and Iseult*, are written in blank verse.

In English speech some sounds are made more prominent than others, *i.e.*, they are accented or stressed. It is upon stress or accent that the rhythm of English verse mainly depends; the words are so arranged that the accented syllables occur at equal intervals of time. In other words, verse may be divided into measures or feet, each of which occupies, approximately at least, the same period of time; and the beginning or end of each foot is marked by a syllable more strongly stressed than the others in that foot.

He spóke; | and Sóh | rab smíl'd | on hím, | and  
tók | the spéar | and dréw | it fróm | his síde, | and  
eásed | his wóund's | impér | ious áng | uish :

Here it is the last syllable of each foot that receives the stress.

Furthermore, this rhythmical series is divided into larger metrical units—verses or lines—which also occupy equal lengths of time ; each contains the same number of the smaller rhythmical units, or feet. In *Sohrab and Rustum* each line contains five beats, and therefore is a line of five feet, or pentameter line.

He spoke ; | and Soh | rab smil'd | on him, | and took  
The spear | and drew | it from | his side, | and eased  
His wound's | imper | ious ang | uish . . .

The feet are alike in two respects :—

- (i) they are equal in duration ;
- (ii) the heaviest accent falls on the last syllable of the foot, or, in other words, the rhythm is *rising* rhythm.

They may, however, differ in other respects :—

- (i) So long as the time-length remains practically constant there may be one, two, or three syllables in the foot. Usually there are two, and the two-syllabled foot may be regarded as the normal. When there are three syllables they are pronounced more rapidly so that they occupy the same time as a two-syllabled foot. When there is only one syllable it is pronounced slowly.

Examples of trisyllabic feet are :—

Gláred, and he shóok on hígh hí's mén | acing spéar  
Near déath, and bý an íg | norant stróke | of thíne.  
A foíl'd circú | itous wán | derer : till | at lást  
His lúm | inous hóme | of wáters ópens, bríght.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Arnold's verse the trisyllabic feet not combined with monosyllabic feet may frequently be pronounced as dissyllabic because two vowel sounds come together, or are separated only by a liquid *l, r, or n*, as *ign'rant, wand'rer, lum'nous* ; *i.e.*, the vowel is slurred or elided. This procedure, however, as Professor Saintsbury points out, destroys the beauty of the verse. It is also quite unnecessary ; for all that is essential is that the three syllables should be equivalent to the normal two in the length of time that they occupy. Furthermore, there are in Arnold, and more frequently in other poets, trisyllabic feet that cannot be reduced to dissyllabic feet by elision, *e.g.*, the first here quoted.

Monosyllabic feet, except in conjunction with trisyllabic, are rare in Matthew Arnold. That is to say, he did not vary his pentameter verse by lines with only nine syllables. But lines of nine syllables are found in other poets:—

Stáy | the kíng hath thrówn his wárdér dówn.

(*Richard I D.*)

Bóot | less hóme and wéather béaten tráck.

(*Henry IV.*; quoted by Mayor.)

And lines of seven syllables instead of eight are found in Arnold's *Tristram*—

Ín | Tyntágel's pálace próud.

Whére | those lífeless lóvers bé;

Swíng | íng wíth ít; ín the líght

Fláps | the ghóstlike tápestrý.

Trisyllabic and monosyllabic feet are usually found in combination.

At my bóy's | ^ yéars, | the cóurage óf a mán : (l. 45)

But Sóhrab cáme | to the béd | ^ síde, | and saíd. (l. 33)

Of the yóung | ^ mán | in hí's, and sígh'd, and saíd :

(l. 64)

^ Córñ | in a góld | en plátter soák'd with wíne. (l. 754)

^ Gláred, | and he shóok | on hígh hí's mén | acíng spéar.

(l. 515)

These lines can be scanned in no other way if the scansion is to represent the rhythm. Two stressed syllables cannot be pronounced together without a perceptible pause being

This way of scanning such lines is largely due to the convention in vogue before Coleridge's time, that the line should be regular in the number of syllables. Even Milton, in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, seems to have followed this idea: for it seems likely that in almost all his verses which have more than ten syllables he would, in theory, have justified the trisyllabic foot on the principle of slurring or elision. Of two vowels coming together, or separated only by *l*, *r*, *n*, the first was elided: 'in glór | y above |', 'pill | ar of fire |'. For other examples see Bridges, *Prosody of Milton*.

made between them. So 'a younger man' takes no longer to pronounce than 'a young man' because the time occupied by the unstressed syllable *-er* was occupied by a pause. In a monosyllabic foot the time of the normal two syllables is filled up, partly by the stressed syllable, on which the voice lingers, and partly by the preceding pause, which is called a compensatory pause.

Of the yóung | <sup>^</sup> mán |

In the two lines last quoted (754 and 515) some prosodists, *e.g.*, Bridges and Mayor, would say that the stress was 'inverted', and that for the first iamb a trochee was substituted. This explanation, however, ignores (*a*) the pause before *corn* and *glared*, and (*b*) the fact that this scansion would make the line appear unrhythmical, whereas it is not. The voice rests on *corn* and *glared*, and hurries over the next two syllables in each case, so that the accents still occur at equal intervals of time.

A two-syllabled foot in rising rhythm, *i.e.*, one composed of an unstressed followed by a stressed syllable, is called an *iamb*. When this is the dominant foot the verse is called iambic verse. The name blank verse should strictly belong to any verse that is not rimed, but in practice it is confined to unrimed iambic pentameters.

A three-syllabled foot in rising rhythm, *i.e.*, one composed of two unstressed followed by a stressed syllable, is called an *anapaest*.

(ii) The ictus or metrical stress is not always of equal weight. In the line

Might now be lying on this bloody sand

the stress on *on* is not as heavy as that on *now*, *ly-*, *blood*, or *sand*. All that is necessary is that it should be heavier than that on the preceding syllable. It frequently happens that a light ictus in one foot is compensated by a slightly heavier one in the adjoining foot.

(iii) Besides the pause (compensatory pause) which, occurring between two accented syllables, helps to fill up the time of a foot, there are two other kinds of which the prosodist must take account (*a*) the metrical pause, marking the end of each metrical unit or line; (*b*) the sense pause, marking the end of a phrase or clause. The sense pause, of course, is present also in prose, and in verse may occur at any part of the line. Its position is frequently, but not necessarily, marked by punctuation. When a clause or sentences comes to an end at the end of a line, then there is a heavy pause; when, however, the line comes to an end in the middle of a phrase the pause is so light that it may almost be neglected. In the latter case the sense and rhythm seem to *overflow* or *run on* into the next line—

Clustering like beehives on the low flat strand  
Of Oxus, . . .

a little back

From the stream's brink . . .

The men of former times had crowned the top  
With a clay fort; but that was fall'n, and now  
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,  
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood  
Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent,  
And found the old man sleeping on his bed  
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.  
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step  
Was dull'd; (vv. 13-29.)

Here seven lines out of seventeen have no sense pause at the end. Contrast the movement of these lines with that of lines 74-82, where each line has a sense pause at the end, or with lines 541-6 quoted below.

There is usually a sense pause within each line, a pause that must be made in reading naturally. It is most

frequently found near the middle ; after the fourth, fifth, or sixth syllable ; but it is sometimes earlier or later. Not infrequently there are two pauses :

though the step  
Was dull'd ; for he slept light, an old man's sleep.

Notice the contrast in the position of the pauses in the following two passages.

Unknown thou art ; || yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.  
Thou dost not slay me, || proud and boastful man !  
No ! Rustum slays me, || and this filial heart.  
For were I matched | with ten such men as thee,  
And I were that | which till to-day I was,  
They should be lying here, || I standing there.  
(ll. 541-6.)

Then, || with weak hasty fingers, || Sohrab loosed  
His belt, || and near the shoulder bared his arm,  
And showed a sign | in faint vermilion points  
Prick'd ; || as a cunning workman, || in Pekin,  
Pricks with vermilion . . .  
(ll. 669-73.)

By all these means a variety of movement is attained without the verse being made unrhymical. The ictus always recurs at the same interval, thus preserving uniformity of time amid the variety of pause, speed, number of syllables, and weight of accent.

That Arnold was not without skill in verse is evident from the conclusion of *Sohrab*, and other lines ; but his ear was far from certain, and the rhythmical movement of his verse is not infrequently awkward and halting. Some examples of his less successful lines are :—

Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts  
(l. 468)

First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears.  
(l. 118)

To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee. (l. 585)  
So thou mightest live too, my son, my son ! (l. 815)

His verse was, perhaps deliberately, cast in a more austere mould than was fashionable in his time, but he was hardly gifted by nature with that 'divine fluidity of movement' which he so much admired in Chaucer.





SOHRAB AND RUSTUM  
AN EPISODE

## AN EPISODE

'The young Sohrab was the fruit of one of Rustum's early amours. He had left his mother, and sought fame under the banners of Afrosiab, whose armies he commanded, and soon obtained a renown beyond that of all contemporary heroes but his father. He had carried death and dismay into the ranks of the Persians, and had terrified the boldest warriors of that country, before Rustum encountered him, which at last that hero resolved to do, under a feigned name. They met three times. The first time they parted by mutual consent, though Sohrab had the advantage; the second, the youth obtained a victory, but granted life to his unknown father; the third was fatal to Sohrab, who, when writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance that is inspired by parental woes, and bade him dread the rage of the mighty Rustum, who must soon learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words, we are told, were as death to the aged hero; and when he recovered from a trance, he called in despair for proofs of what Sohrab had said. The afflicted and dying youth tore open his mail, and showed his father a seal which his mother had placed on his arm when she discovered to him the secret of his birth, and bade him seek his father. The sight of his own signet rendered Rustum quite frantic; he cursed himself, attempting to put an end to his existence, and was only prevented by the efforts of his expiring son. After Sohrab's death, he burnt his tents and all his goods, and carried the corpse to Seistan, where it was interred; the army of Turan was, agreeably to the last request of Sohrab, permitted to cross the Oxus unmolested. . . . To reconcile us

to the improbability of this tale, we are informed that Rustum could have no idea his son was in existence. The mother of Sohrab had written to him her child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant if she revealed the truth ; and Rustum, as before stated, fought under a feigned name, an usage not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days.'—SIR JOHN MALCOLM'S *History of Persia*.

## ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

SOHRAB interviews Peran-Wisa, the Tartar general, and asks for an opportunity for a single combat with one of the Persian chiefs, so that perhaps his fame may reach the ears of Rustum, his father, whom he is seeking (lines 1-62). Peran-Wisa, after hesitation, goes forth as the armies (described in 104-40) were gathering, and challenged the Persian leaders (63-153). Reception of the challenge by either army described in similes (154-69). The Persians after consultation accept the challenge (170-86).

Rustum, the champion of the Persians and their one hope, at first refuses to fight, but is eventually roused by taunts (187-259). He dons his armour, and comes forth (259-90). Sohrab advances to meet him. Rustum, moved to pity by his youth and beauty, attempts to dissuade Sohrab from the duel (291-333). Sohrab, moved by a sudden intuition, asks his opponent if he is not Rustum; but the old hero, suspecting some wily deceit, denies this (334-78). Sohrab is undaunted by Rustum's boasts, since he believes that the result is in the hands of destiny (379-97).

The fight: first stage ending in Sohrab's favour (397-426). Rustum refuses the truce proposed by Sohrab (427-69). Second stage of the fight: Sohrab when unarmed and bewildered by the shout of Rustum, is mortally wounded (470-526).

Sohrab, in reply to Rustum's ungenerous taunts, replies that it was the name of Rustum, and not his opponent's strength, that caused his defeat, and that Rustum, his father, will avenge his death (527-55). [Simile of the eagle (556-75).] Rustum, who had been told that his child was a girl, is at first incredulous, is soon troubled by doubts, for Sohrab recalled familiar names, and was in age and looks just what his own son would have been (575-652), and is finally convinced by the seal which he had given to his wife for their child (653-88). Then, struck with horror at his deed, he desires to take his life (689-705), but is prevented by Sohrab, who is stoically resigned to the ruling of fate (706-25).

The armies are struck with awe, and even Rustum's charger weeps in sympathy (726-40). Sohrab recalls how he has never in life had the good fortune that Ruksh has enjoyed, viz., that of living in Seistan, his father's home (741-70), and requests Rustum to allow the armies to depart in peace, and to carry his body to Seistan for burial (771-94). Rustum promises this, and looks forward to the day when his life of fighting will be ended (795-837).

Sohrab dies (838-56). Rustum watches by his son's body (857-64), and with nightfall the armies depart to their camps (865-74). The poem ends with a peaceful picture of the Oxus flowing steadily on, undisturbed by the terrible conflict in the world of men, to its goal in the Aral Sea.

# Sohrab and Rustum

AND the first grey of morning fill'd the east,  
And the fog rose out of Oxus stream.  
But all the Tartar camp along the stream  
Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep :  
Sohrab alone, he slept not : all night long  
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed ;  
But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,  
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,  
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,  
And went abroad into the cold wet fog,  
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's  
Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood  
clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand shore  
Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow  
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere :  
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,  
And to a hillock came, a little back  
From the stream's brink, the spot where first a boat,  
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.  
The men of former times had crown'd the top  
With a clay fort : but that was fall'n ; and now  
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,  
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.  
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood  
Upon the thick-pil'd carpets in the tent,  
And found the old man sleeping on his bed  
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.  
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step  
Was dull'd ; for he slept light, an old man's sleep ;

- 30 And he rose quickly on one arm, and said :—  
 ‘ Who art thou ? for it is not yet clear dawn.  
 Speak ! is there news, or any night alarm ? ’  
 But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said :—  
 ‘ Thou know’st me, Peran-Wisa : it is I.  
 The sun is not yet risen, and the foe ~~sleeps~~  
 Sleep ; but I sleep not ; all night long I lie  
 Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.  
 For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek  
 Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
- 40 In Samarcand, before the army march’d ;  
 And I will tell thee what my heart desires.  
 Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan first  
 I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,  
 I have still serv’d Afrasiab well, and shown,  
 At my boy’s years, the courage of a man.  
 This too thou know’st, that, while I still bear on  
 The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,  
 And beat the Persians back on every field,  
 I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
- 50 Rustum, my father ; who, I hop’d, should greet,  
 Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field  
 His not unworthy, not inglorious son.  
 So I long hop’d, but him I never find.  
 Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.  
 Let the two armies rest to-day : but I  
 Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords  
 To meet me, man to man : if I prevail,  
 Rustum will surely hear it ; if I fall—  
 Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
- 60 Dim is the rumour of a common fight,  
Where host meets host, and many names are sunk :  
But of a single combat Fame speaks clear.’ )  
 He spoke : and Peran-Wisa took the hand  
 Of the young man in his, and sigh’d, and said :—

' O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine !  
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,  
And share the battle's common chance with us  
Who love thee, but must press for ever first,  
In single fight incurring single risk,  
To find a father thou hast never seen ? 70  
That were far best, my son, to stay with us  
Unmurmuring ; in our tents, while it is war,  
And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.  
But, if this one desire indeed rules all,  
To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight :  
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,  
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son !  
But far hence seek him, for he is not here.  
For now it is not as when I was young,  
When Rustum was in front of every fray : 80  
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,  
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.  
Whether that his own mighty strength at last  
Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age ;  
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.  
There go :—Thou wilt not ? Yet my heart forbodes  
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.  
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost  
To us : fain therefore send thee hence, in peace  
To seek thy father, not seek single fights 90  
In vain !—but who can keep the lion's cub  
From ravening ? and who govern Rustum's son ?  
Go : I will grant thee what thy heart desires '.

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left  
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay,  
And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat  
He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,  
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took  
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword ;



- 100 And on his head he placed his sheep-skin cap,  
Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul ;  
And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd  
His herald to his side, and went abroad.

- The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd the fog  
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands :  
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen fil'd  
Into the open plain ; so Haman bade ;  
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa rul'd  
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
- 110 From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd :  
As when, some grey November morn, the files,  
In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes,  
Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes  
Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,  
Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, southward bound  
For the warm Persian sea-board ; so they stream'd.  
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,  
First with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears ;  
Large men, large steeds ; who from Bokhara come
- 120 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.  
Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,  
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,  
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands ;  
Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink  
The acid milk of camels, and their wells.  
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came  
From far, and a more doubtful service own'd ;  
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks  
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
- 130 And close-set skull-caps ; and those wilder hordes  
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste  
Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes who stray  
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,  
Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.

These all fil'd out from camp into the plain.  
And on the other side the Persians form'd :  
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,  
The Ilyats of Khorassan : and behind  
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,  
Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel. 140  
But Peran-Wisa with his herald came  
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,  
And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks,  
And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw  
That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,  
He took his spear, and to the front he came,  
And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.  
And the old Tartar came upon the sand  
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said :—  
‘ Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear ! 150  
Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.  
But choose a champion from the Persian lords  
To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man ’.  
As, in the country, on a morn in June,  
When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,  
A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—  
So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa sa'd,  
A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran  
Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they lov'd.  
But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool, 160  
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,  
That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow ;  
Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass  
Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,  
Chok'd by the air, and scarce can they themselves  
Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—  
In single file they move, and stop their breath,  
For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—  
So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

- 170 And to Ferood his brother Chiefs came up  
To counsel : Gudurz and Zoarrah came,  
And Feraburz, who rul'd the Persian host  
Second, and was the uncle of the King :  
These came and counsell'd ; and then Gudurz said :  
    ' Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,  
    Yet champion have we none to match this youth.  
    He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.  
    But Rustum came last night ; aloof he sits  
    And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart :
- 180 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear  
The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.  
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.  
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up  
    So spake he ; and Ferood stood forth and said :—  
    ' Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.  
    Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man '.
- He spoke ; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode  
    Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.  
    But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,  
190 And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,  
    Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.  
    Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,  
    Just pitch'd : the high pavilion in the midst  
    Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.  
    And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found  
    Rustum : his morning meal was done, but still  
    The table stood beside him, charg'd with food ;  
    A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,  
    And dark green melons ; and there Rustum sate
- 200 Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,  
    And play'd with it ; but Gudurz came and stood  
    Before him ; and he look'd, and saw him stand ;  
    And with a cry sprang up, and dropp'd the bird,  
    And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said :—

'Welcome ! these eyes could see no better sight.  
What news ? but sit down first, and eat and drink '.

But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said :—

'Not now : a time will come to eat and drink,  
But not to-day : to-day has other needs.

The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze : 210

For from the Tartars is a challenge brought  
To pick a champion from the Persian lords  
To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—  
Sohrab men call him, but his birth is his.

O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's !

He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.

And he is young, and Iran's Chiefs are old,  
Or else too weak ; and all eyes turn to thee.

Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose '.

He spoke : but Rustum answer'd with a smile— 220

'Go to ! if Iran's Chiefs are old, then I

Am older : if the young are weak, the King  
Errs strangely : for the King, for Kai-Khosroo,

Himself is young, and honours younger men,

And lets the aged moulder to their graves.

Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—

The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.

For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame ?

For would that I myself had such a son,

And not that one slight helpless girl I have, 230

A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war.

And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,

My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,

And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,

And he has none to guard his weak old age.

There would I go, and hang my armour up,

And with my great name fence that weak old man,

And spend the goodly treasures I have got,

And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,

240 And leave to death the host of thankless kings,  
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more '.

He spoke, and smil'd ; and Gudurz made reply :—

' What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,  
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks  
Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,  
Hidest thy face ? Take heed, lest men should say,  
*Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,  
And shuns to peril it with younger men* '.

And, greatly mov'd, then Rustum made reply :—

250 O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words ?

Thou knowest better words than this to say.

What is one more, one less, obscure or fam'd, .

Valiant or craven, young or old, to me ?

Are not they mortal, am not I myself ?

But who for men of nought would do great deeds ?

Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.

But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms ;

Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd

In single fight with any mortal man '.

260 He spoke, and frown'd ; and Gudurz turn'd, and ran

Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,

Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.

But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd

His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,

And clad himself in steel : the arms he chose

Were plain, and on his shield was no device,

Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,

And from the fluted spine atop a plume

Of horsehair wav'd, a scarlet horsehair plume.

270 So arm'd he issued forth ; and Ruksh, his horse,

Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,

Ruksh, whose renown was nois'd through all the earth,

The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once

Did in Bokhara by the river find

A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,  
And rear'd him ; a bright bay, with lofty crest ;  
Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green  
Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd  
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know :  
So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd 280  
The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.  
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts  
Hail'd ; but the Tartars knew not who he was.  
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes  
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,  
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,  
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,  
Having made up his tale of precious pearl  
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands,  
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came. 290

And Rustum to the Persian front advanc'd,  
And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.  
And as afield the reapers cut a swathe  
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,  
And on each side are squares of standing corn,  
And in the midst a stubble, short and bare ;  
So on each side were squares of men, with spears  
Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.  
And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast  
His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and saw 300  
Sohrab come forth, and ey'd him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,  
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge  
Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—  
At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,  
When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes—  
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts  
Of that poor drudge may be ; so Rustum ey'd  
The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar

- 310 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth  
All the most valiant chiefs : long he perus'd  
His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.  
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd ;  
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,  
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws  
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,  
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—  
So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.  
And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
- 320 As he beheld him coming ; and he stood,  
And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said :—  
‘ O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,  
And warm, and pleasant ; but the grave is cold.  
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.  
Behold me : I am vast, and clad in iron,  
And tried ; and I have stood on many a field  
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe :  
Never was that field lost, or that foe sav'd.  
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death ?
- 330 Be govern'd : quit the Tartar host, and come  
To Iran, and be as my son to me,  
And fight beneath my banner till I die.  
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou ’.  
So he spake, mildly : Sohrab heard his voice, ’  
The mighty voice of Rustum ; and he saw  
His giant figure planted on the sand,  
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief  
Has builded on the waste in former years  
Against the robbers ; and he saw that head,  
340 Streak'd with its first grey hairs : hope fill'd his soul ;  
And he ran forwards and embrac'd his knees,  
And clasp'd his hand within his own and said :—  
‘ Oh, by thy father's head ! by thine own soul !  
Art thou not Rustum ? Speak ! art thou not he ? ’

But Rustum ey'd askance the kneeling youth,  
And turn'd away, and spoke to his own soul :—

‘ Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean.

False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.

For if I now confess this thing he asks,

And hide it not, but say—*Rustum is here*—

350

He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,

But he will find some pretext not to fight,

And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,

A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.

And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,

In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—

“ I challeng'd once, when the two armies camp'd

Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords

To cope with me in single fight ; but they

Shrank ; only Rustum dar'd : then he and I

360

Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away ”.

So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud.

Then were the chiefs of Iran sham'd through me ’.

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud :—

‘ Rise ! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus

Of Rustum ? I am here, whom thou hast call'd

By challenge forth : make good thy vaunt, or yield.

Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight ?

Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee.

For well I know, that did great Rustum stand

370

Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,

There would be then no talk of fighting more.

But being what I am, I tell thee this ;

Do thou record it in thine inmost soul :

Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield ;

Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds

Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,

Oxus in summer wash them all away ’.

He spoke : and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet :—



- 380 'Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so.  
 I am no girl, to be made pale by words.  
 Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand  
 Here on this field, there were no fighting then.  
 But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.  
 Begin: thou art more vast, more dread than I,  
 And thou art prov'd, I know, and I am young  
 But yet Success sways with the breath of Heaven.  
 And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure  
 Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
- 390 'For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,  
 Pois'd on the top of a huge wave of Fate,  
 Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.  
 And whether it will heave us up to land,  
 Or whether it will roll us out to sea,  
 Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,  
 We know not, and no search will make us know:  
 Only the event will teach us in its hour'
- He spoke; and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd  
 His spear: down from the shoulder, down it came,
- 400 As on some partridge in the corn a hawk  
 That long has tower'd in the airy clouds  
 Drops like a plummet: Sohrab saw it come,  
 And sprang aside, quick as a flash: the spear  
 Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand  
 Which it sent flying wide:—then Sohrab threw  
 In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield: sharp rang,  
 The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.  
 And Rustum seiz'd his club, which none but he  
 Could wield: an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
- 410 Still rough; like those which men in treeless plains  
 To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,  
 Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up  
 By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time  
 Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,

And strewn the channels with torn boughs ; so huge  
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck  
One stroke ; but again Sohrab sprang aside  
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came  
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.  
And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell 420  
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand :  
And now might Sohrab have unsheath'd his sword,  
And pierc'd the mighty Rustum while he lay  
Dizzy, and on his knees, and chok'd with sand :  
But he look'd on, and smil'd, nor bar'd his sword,  
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said :—  
‘ Thou strik'st too hard : that club of thine will float  
Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.  
But rise, and be not wroth ; not wroth am I :  
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul. 430  
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum : be it so.  
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul ?  
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too ;  
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,  
And heard their hollow roar of dying men ;  
But never was my heart thus touch'd before.  
Are they from Heaven, these softening of the heart ?  
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven !  
Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,  
And make a truce, and sit upon this sand, 440  
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,  
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.  
There are enough foes in the Persian host  
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang ;  
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou  
Mayst fight ; fight them, when they confront thy spear.  
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me ' !  
He ceas'd : but while he spake, Rustum had risen,  
And stood erect, trembling with rage : his club

- 450 He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,  
 Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand  
 Blaz'd bright and baleful, like that autumn Star,  
 The baleful sign of fevers : dust had soil'd  
 His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.  
 His breast heav'd ; his lips foam'd ; and twice his voice  
 Was chok'd with rage : at last these words broke way :—  
 ( Girl ! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands !  
 Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words !  
 Fight ; let me hear thy hateful voice no more !
- 460 Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now  
 With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance ;  
 But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance  
 Of battle, and with me, who make no play  
 Of war : I fight it out, and hand to hand.  
 Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine !  
 Remember all thy valour : try thy feints  
 And cunning : all the pity I had is gone :  
 Because thou hast sham'd me before both the hosts  
 With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles '.
- 470 He spoke ; and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,  
 And he too drew his sword : at once they rush'd  
 Together, as two eagles on one prey  
 Come rushing down together from the clouds,  
 One from the east, one from the west : their shields  
 Dash'd with a clang together, and a din  
 Rose, such as that of the sinewy woodcutters  
 Make often in the forest's heart at morn,  
 Of hewing axes, crashing trees : such blows
- n. Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
- 480 And you would say that sun and stars took part  
 In that unnatural conflict ; for a cloud  
 Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun  
 Over the fighters' heads ; and a wind rose  
 Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,

And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.  
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone ;  
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand  
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,  
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.  
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes 490  
And labouring breath ; first Rustum struck the shield  
Which Sohrab held stiff out ; the steel-spik'd spear  
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,  
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.  
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,  
Nor clove its steel quite through ; but all the crest  
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,  
Never till now defil'd, sunk to the dust ;  
And Rustum bow'd his head ; but then the gloom  
Grew blacker : thunder rumbled in the air, 500  
And lightnings rent the cloud ; and Ruksh, the horse,  
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry :  
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar  
Of some pair'd desert lion, who all day  
Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side  
And comes at night to die upon the sand :  
The two hosts heard that cry, and quak'd for fear,  
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.  
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,  
And struck again ; and again Rustum bow'd 510  
His head ; but this time all the blade, like glass,  
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,  
And in his hand the hilt remain'd alone.  
Then Rustum rais'd his head : his dreadful eyes  
Glar'd, and he shook on high his menacing spear,  
And shouted, *Rustum !* Sohrab heard that shout,  
And shrank amaz'd : back he recoil'd one step,  
And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing Form :  
And then he stood bewilder'd ; and he dropp'd

520 His covering shield, and the spear pierc'd his side.  
He reel'd, and staggering back, sunk to the ground.  
And then the gloom dispers'd, and the wind fell,  
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all  
The cloud ; and the two armies saw the pair .  
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,  
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.—

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began  
' Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill  
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,  
530 And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.  
Or else that the great Rustum would come down  
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move  
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.  
And then that all the Tartar host would praise  
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,  
To glad thy father in his weak old age.  
Fool ! thou art slain, and by an unknown man !  
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,  
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old '.

540 And with a fearless mien Sohrab replied :—  
' Unknown thou art ; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.  
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man !  
No ! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.  
For were I match'd with ten such men as thou,  
And I were he who till to-day I was,  
They should be lying here, I standing there.  
But that beloved name unnerv'd my arm—  
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,  
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield  
550 Fall ; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.  
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.  
But hear thou this, fierce Man, tremble to hear !  
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death !  
My father, whom I seek through all the world,

He shall avenge my death, and punish thee' !

As when some hunter in the spring hath found

A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,

Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,

And pierc'd her with an arrow as she rose,

And follow'd her to find out where she fell

560

Far off ;—anon her mate comes winging back

From hunting, and a great way off describes

His huddling young left sole ; at that, he checks

His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps

Circles above his eyry, with loud screams

Chiding his mate back to her nest ( but she

Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,

In some far stony gorge out of his ken,

A heap of fluttering feathers ) never more

Shall the lake glass her, flying over it ;

570

Never the black and dripping precipices

Echo her stormy scream as she sails by :—

As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss—

So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood

Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said :—

' What prate is this of fathers and revenge ?

The mighty Rustum never had a son '.

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied :—

' Ah yes, he had ! and that lost son am I.

580

Surely the news will one day reach his ear,

Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,

Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here ;

And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap

To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.

Fierce Man, bethink thee, for an only son !

What will that grief, what will that vengeance be !

Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen !

Yet him I pity not so much, but her,

- 590 My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells  
With that old King, her father, who grows grey  
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.  
Her most I pity, who no more will see  
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,  
With spoils and honour, when the war is done.  
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,  
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear ;  
And then will that defenceless woman learn  
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more ;  
600 But that in battle with a nameless foe,  
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain '.

- He spoke ; and as he ceas'd he wept aloud,  
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.  
He spoke ; but Rustum listen'd, plung'd in thought.  
Nor did he yet believe it was his son  
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew ;  
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,  
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,  
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all :  
610 So that sad mother sent him word, for fear  
Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms ;  
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,  
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son ;  
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.  
So deem'd he ; yet he listen'd, plung'd in thought ;  
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide  
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore  
At the full moon : tears gathered in his eyes ;  
For he remembered his own early youth,  
620 And all its bounding rapture ; as, at dawn,  
The Shepherd from his mountain lodge descries  
A far bright City, smitten by the sun,  
Through many rolling clouds ;—so Rustum saw  
His youth saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom :

And that old King, her father, who lov'd well  
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child  
With joy ; and all the pleasant life they led,  
They three, in that long-distant summer-time—  
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt  
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills  
In Ader-baijan. (And he saw that Youth,  
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,  
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,  
Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe  
Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,  
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,  
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,  
On the mown, dying grass ;—) so Sohrab lay,  
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.  
And Rustum gaz'd on him with grief, and said :—

630

640

‘ O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son  
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have lov'd !  
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men  
Have told thee false ;—thou art not Rustum's son.  
For Rustum had no son : one child he had—  
But one—a girl : who with her mother now  
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—  
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war ’

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath ; for now  
The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce,  
And he desired to draw forth the steel,  
And let the blood flow free, and so to die ;  
But first he would convince his stubborn foe—  
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said :—

650

‘ Man, who art thou who dost deny my words ?  
(Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,  
And Falsehood, while I liv'd, was far from mine.  
I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear  
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,



660 That she might prick it on the babe she bore '.

He spoke : and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks ;  
 And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand,  
 Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,  
 That the hard iron corselet clank'd aloud :  
 And to his heart he press'd the other hand,  
 And in a hollow voice he spake, and said :—

' Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie.  
 If thou shew this, then art thou Rustum's son '.

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loos'd  
 670 His belt, and near the shoulder bar'd his arm,  
 And shew'd a sign in faint vermilion points  
 Prick'd : as a cunning workman, in Pekin,  
 Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,  
 An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,  
 And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp  
 Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands :  
 So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd  
 On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal  
 It was that Griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,  
 580 Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,  
 A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.)  
 Him that kind Creature found, and rear'd, and lov'd—  
 Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.  
 And Sohrab bar'd that figure on his arm,  
 And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,  
 And then he touch'd it with his hand and said :—

' How say'st thou ? Is that sign the proper sign  
 Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's ' ?

He spoke : but Rustum gaz'd, and gaz'd, and stood  
 690 Speechless ; and then he utter'd one sharp cry—  
 O Boy—*thy Father* !—and his voice choked there.  
 And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,  
 And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.  
 But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast

His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,  
 And with fond faltering fingers strok'd his cheeks,  
 Trying to call him back to life : and life  
 Came back to Rustum, and he op'd his eyes  
 And they stood wide with horror ; and he seiz'd  
 In both his hands the dust which lay around, 700  
 And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,  
 His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms :  
 And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,  
 And his sobs chok'd him ; and he clutch'd his sword,  
 To draw it, and for ever let life out.

But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands.  
 And with a soothing voice he spoke, and said—  
 / Father, forbear : for I but meet to-day  
 The doom that at my birth was written down  
 In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand 710  
 Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,  
 When first I saw thee ; and thy heart spoke too,  
 I know it : but Fate trod those promptings down  
 Under its iron heel ; Fate, Fate engag'd  
 The strife and hurl'd me on my father's spear.  
 But let us speak no more of this : I find  
 My father ; let me feel that I have found.  
 Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take  
 My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,  
 And wash them with thy tears, and say, " My Son " ! 720  
 Quick ! quick ! for number'd are my sands of life,  
 And swift ; for like the lightning to this field  
 I came, and like the wind I go away—  
 Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.  
 But it was writ in Heaven that this should be '.

So said he : and his voice releas'd the heart  
 Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth ; he cast  
 His arms around his son's neck, and wept aloud,  
 And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts

- 730 When they saw Rustum's grief : and Ruksh, the horse,  
 With his head bowing to the ground, and mane  
 Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute <sup>woe</sup>  
 First to the one then to the other mov'd  
 His head, as if enquiring what their grief  
 Might mean ; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,  
 The big warm tears roll'd down, and cak'd the sand.  
 But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said :—  
 ' Ruksh, now thou grieve'st ; but, O Ruksh, thy feet  
 Should then have rotted on their nimble joints,
- 740 When first they bore thy Master to this field '.  
 But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said :—  
 ' Is this then Ruksh ? How often, in past days.  
 My mother told me of thee, thou brave Steed !  
 My terrible father's terrible horse ; and said,  
 That I should one day find thy lord and thee.  
 Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.  
 O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I ;  
 For thou hast gone where I shall never go,  
 And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home. )
- 750 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,  
 And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake  
 Of Zirrah ; and the aged Zal himself  
 Has often strok'd thy neck, and given thee food,  
 Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,  
 And said—" O Ruksh ! bear Rustum well " !—but I  
 Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,  
 Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,  
 Nor slak'd my thirst at the clear Helmund stream :  
 But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen
- 760 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,  
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,  
 And the black Toorkmun tents ; and only drunk  
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,  
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,

The northern Sir ; and this great Oxus stream—  
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die '.

And, with a heavy groan, Rustum replied :—

Oh that its waves were flowing over me !

Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt

Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head ' 770

And, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied :—

' Desire not that, my father ; thou must live.

For some are born to do great deeds, and live,

As some are born to be obscur'd, and die.

Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,

And reap a second glory in thine age.

Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.

But come : thou seest this great host of men

Which follow me ; I pray thee, slay not these :

Let me entreat for them : what have they done ? 780

They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.

Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.

But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,

But carry me with thee to Seistan,

And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,

Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.

And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,

And heap a stately mound above my bones,

And plant a far-seen pillar over all :

That so the passing horsemen on the waste 790

May see my tomb a great way off, and say—

*Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,*

*Whom his great father did in ignorance kill—*

And I be not forgotten in my grave

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied :—

' Fear not ; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,

So shall it be : for I will burn my tents,

And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,

And carry thee away to Seistan,

- 800 And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,  
 With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.  
 And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,  
 And heap a stately mound above thy bones,  
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all :  
 And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.  
 And I will spare thy host : yea, let them go :  
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.  
 What should I do with slaying any more ?  
 For would that all whom I have ever slain
- 810 Might be once more alive ; my bitterest foes,  
 And they who were call'd champions in their time,  
 And through whose death I won that fame I have ;  
 And I were nothing but a common man,  
 A poor, mean soldier, and without renown ;  
 So thou mightest live too, my Son, my Son !  
 Or rather would that I, even I myself,  
 Might now be lying on this bloody sand,  
 Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,  
 Not thou of mine ; and I might die, not thou ;
- 820 And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan ;  
 And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine ;  
 And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,  
 For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end.*—  
 But now in blood and battles was my youth,  
 And full of blood and battles is my age  
 And I shall never end this life of blood  
 Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied :—  
 A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man !  
 But thou shalt yet have peace ; only not now ;
- 830 Not yet : but thou shalt have it on that day,  
 When thou shalt sail in a high-masted Ship,  
 Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,  
 Returning home over the salt blue sea,  
 From laying thy dear Master in his grave

And Rustum gaz'd on Sohrab's face, and said :—  
' Soon be that day, my Son, and deep that sea !  
Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure '.

He spoke ; and Sohrab smil'd on him, and took  
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eas'd  
His wound's imperious anguish : but the blood 840  
Came welling from the open gash, and life  
Flowed with the stream : all down his cold white side  
The crimson torrent ran, dim now, and soil'd,  
Like the soil'd tissue of white violets  
Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,  
By romping children, whom their nurses call  
From the hot fields at noon : his head droop'd low  
His limbs grew slack ; motionless, white, he lay—  
White, with eyes clos'd ; only when heavy gasps,  
Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame, 850  
Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,  
And fix'd them feebly on his father's face :  
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs  
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,  
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,  
And youth and bloom, and this delightful world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.  
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak  
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.  
As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd 860  
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear  
His house, now, mid their broken flights of steps,  
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—  
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.)

And night came down over the solemn waste,  
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,  
And darken'd all ; and a cold fog, with night,  
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,  
As of a great assembly loos'd, and fires

870 Began to twinkle through the fog : for now  
 Both armies mov'd to camp, and took their meal :  
 The Persians took it on the open sands  
 Southward ; the Tartars by the river marge :  
 And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic river floated on,  
 Out of the mist and hum of that low land,  
 Into the frosty starlight, and there mov'd,  
 Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasman waste,  
 Under the solitary moon : he flow'd

880 Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunje,  
 Brimming, and bright, and large : then sands begin  
 To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
 And split his currents ; that for many a league  
 The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along  
 Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—  
 Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
 In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,  
 A foil'd circuitous wanderer :—till at last  
 The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide

890 His luminous home of waters opens, bright  
 And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bath'd stars  
 Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

## NOTES

1. **And.** The story, being ostensibly only an Episode in a larger series of events, commences with *and* as if to connect itself with the part preceding it in the whole narrative.

4. **plunged in sleep.** Their sound sleep is contrasted with Sohrab's watchfulness. In this metaphor, sleep is regarded as a river in which the men were deeply plunged. The contrast is emphasised by the superfluous 'he'.

11, 12, 16. Notice the repetition of the word 'through', and of the same idea in slightly different words.

15. The Oxus rises in the Pamir, and so, when in summer the snows are melting, the river is flooded.

25. **thick piled**, not 'heaped in abundance,' but 'with a thick pile'. The pile or nap of a carpet is formed by the short vertical fibres.

29. In the *Shah Nameh* Peran-Wisa hardly figures at all till after the death of Sohrab. It is hardly likely therefore that at this time he would be an old man.

37. Repetition ; *cf.* l. 6.

38. **So**, 'thus, as I am doing'.

39. **as thy son**, 'as if I were thy son'. The word *as* is in itself ambiguous ; it is used quite differently in the phrase 'to heed thee as my father', *i.e.*, as if you were my father.

42-3. It was in Ader-baijan, a province in the N.W. of Persia, that Sohrab lived with his mother Temineh, daughter of the King of Samengan. At a very early age, being famous in feats of arms, he took service in the Tartar army.

45. Antithesis.

49. Repetition for emphasis ; the next two lines give another example of epic repetition ('should . . greet').

52. **not unworthy, not inglorious**, the rhetorical figure of *litotes*, a deliberate understatement ; *cf.* 'a citizen of no mean city', *i.e.*, of a great city ; 'he is no fool', *i.e.*, he is the reverse of a fool.

56. **challenge forth**, elliptical for 'challenge to come forth'.

60. **common** = general ; 'no one can easily win distinction in a general engagement', for all are occupied with their own fights.

61. **many names are sunk**, metaphorical for 'are lost', as a boat is lost when it sinks at sea.



62. *fame speaks clear*. Fame is personified.

63. He spoke, imitation of the classical construction, 'he finished speaking'.

67. *Share the battle's common chance*; either share the dangers, the chance of death, or the chance of distinction and glory. In view of line 69 probably the former.

71. *were*, subjunctive = 'would be'. The indicative 'it is far best' is not used here because the speaker knows that Sohrab will not stay; the possibility will not be realised in fact.

82. *Selstan*; here a trisyllabic word *Sá-is-stán*, as in *l.* 750, 757, 799. The modern pronunciation makes it ordinarily disyllabic, *Sistan*.

83. *whether that . . . or in some quarrel*. These are alternative reasons for Rustum's retirement, but the parallelism is obscured by the form of expression; in prose correlatives should be followed by similar words or phrases; 'either because he feels the advances of old age, or because he has quarrelled . . . '.

85. *the Persian King*. The events related in the poem took place in the reign of Kai Kao<sup>ks</sup> (probably the Cyaxares known to Greek historians). Arnold, however, in *l.* 223, names him as Kai Khosroo (probably the Cyrus of Herodotus), who was a grandson of Kai Kao<sup>ks</sup>.

86-7. *forbodes*, insert 'that'.

87. *this field*, field of battle.

88-91. There are several ellipses. 'I should be glad to feel sure that you were safe . . . gladly therefore would I send thee hence to seek Rustum by peaceful means, and not to seek duels that are useless'.

91-2. Rhetorical question equivalent to negative assertion. The two questions in juxtaposition contain an implied comparison; Sohrab has the impetuosity and pugnacity that one might expect from the son of Rustum, who was like a lion amongst men.

104. *by this*, 'by this time'.

111 *et seq.* The simile of the cranes may have been suggested by Homer, *Il.* ii., 459-63. 'And as the many tribes of feathered birds, wild geese or cranes or long-necked swans, on the Asian mead by Kay-strios' stream, fly hither and thither joying in their plumage, and with loud cries settle ever onwards, and the mead resounds; even so poured forth the many tribes of warriors from ships and huts into the Skamandrian plain'.

Cranes always preserve an orderly formation in their flight.

114. *the Arallan estuaries*, i.e., the estuaries (the wide parts near the mouths) of the rivers that flow into the Aral Sea, viz., the Oxus and Jaxartes.

For the series of proper names in these and the following thirty lines cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, i. 576-87, *Paradise Regained*, ii. 350-65.

Arnold's names have neither the sonorousness nor the imaginative value of Milton's (see Macaulay, *Essay on Milton*, § 24); but they have the advantage of being more appropriate from the point of view of local colouring. On the local colouring of the poem Arnold spent much care, as witness the geographical names here and in lines 750-66, the details in ll. 96-101, and the similes generally. Of the similes, Arnold said, 'I took a great deal of trouble to orientalise them (the Bahrein diver was originally an ordinary fisher) because I thought they looked strange, and jarred, if western'. Consequently the poem is distinguished, in the words of a contemporary reviewer, by 'the vividness with which he has seized and expressed the whole environment of his picture, the vast spaces of Central Asia, and the wild freedom of the Tartar life'.

115. *frore*, an archaism for 'frozen'; the perfect participle of the O.E. verb *freōsan*, to freeze, was *forēn*. Cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ii. 595.

120. This fermented milk is called *koumiss*.

122. *the lances*, i.e., the lancers, or men who carry lances. By the figure of metonymy, the name of the instrument stands for the name of the user of the instrument, because of the close association between the two. Cf. 'The pen is mightier than the sword', which means that writers have greater power than soldiers; so also 'the press' means the men who use the printing-press, especially the editorial staff of a newspaper.

127. *a more doubtful service*; their allegiance to King Afrasiab was not very steady.

130. *skull-caps*; caps fitting closely to the head.

138. *Ilyats*. This word in itself means no more than 'tribes', but seems to have been applied particularly to the tribes of Khorassan.

142. *threading*. The usual phrase would be 'threading his way through'. The metaphor implies that it was not easy; 'making his way through with some difficulty, as one passes a thread through the eye of a needle'.

150. According to Firdausi it is Sohrab himself who does this challenging, and in the first instance he challenges Kai-Kaus.

156. This representation of external nature as capable of human emotion was called by Ruskin a Pathetic Fallacy. He might have said that corn could not in actual fact have any feeling of joy, although it may falsely appear to be joyful to an imaginative mind under the influence of the emotion of joy. In connection with Kingsley's line,

'The cruel, crawling foam,'

he observes, 'The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl. The state of mind which attributes to it these characteristics of a living creature, is one in which the reason is unhinged by grief'. But it may be said that to endow these things 'with animation and soul is not necessarily to

falsify, may rather be to see more to the very root of them'. T is a truth of imagination as well as a truth of science. This figure is a special form of personification.

161. the Indian Caucasus, the Hindu Kush range of mountains.

162. milk snow. Milk is here used as an adjective; 'snow of whiteness'. This gives a much more vivid picture than the plain 'white', which only conveys an abstract idea.

165. chok'd by the air; a bold use of the word to signify the stop of breathing, not, as usual, because the throat or windpipe was blocked by some solid or liquid, but because in high altitudes the air is so

166. It is said that travellers, when crossing high passes, come eat sugared mulberries in order to lessen the difficulty of breathing.

167. stop their breath, hold their breath lest by the vibration of the air they should start an avalanche. The prohibition of shouting is a common precaution in Alpine climbing.

169. pale, with fear.

177. take up the challenge = accept. Probably the phrase comes from the mediæval custom of throwing down a glove into the lists as a challenge in a tournament; whoever wished to accept the challenge would pick up the glove.

Arnold prided himself on what he called the 'literalness' of his poetry. This does not mean that he avoided metaphor, although metaphors, in contrast with the similes, are not remarkable for frequency; but his metaphors certainly are rarely far-fetched, vivid or obscure in any way.

178. aloof he sits, 'apart or at a distance'. Rustum had quarrelled with the King and would take no part in the fighting. Compare the withdrawal of Achilles from active participation in the siege of Troy in wrath against Agamemnon. For *aloof*, see Glossary.

183. the while, 'meanwhile'.

188. through the opening squadrons; they stood aside to make way for Peran-Wisa. Note Arnold's care over details. Previously, as he was advancing from rear to front, they had not made way because they could not have seen him, but now, after he had made his challenge before them, all eyes were upon him.

210. stand at gaze, expectant. Gazing is looking intently at something, and the phrase *at gaze* is used of deer in the attitude of gazing and expecting something to appear.

217. Antithesis.

Iran, *i.e.*, Persia; Iran was the mythological founder of the Persian race, as Tur was of the Turanian.

**221. Go to!** an imperative frequently used in Shakespeare expressing impatience or remonstrance.

**223. Kai-Khosroo.** Arnold has made a mistake here. The events occurred in the reign of Kai-Kaus, the grandfather and predecessor of Kai-Khosroes. See note to line 85.

**229.** See Introduction, § 8, for the significance of these lines in the structure of the plot. Cf. 609.

**232. snow-hair'd Zal.** Zal was, according to tradition, born with white hair; hence the name, which means Aged. This was regarded as an ill omen, and he was exposed on the Elburz mountains, where, however, he was rescued and nurtured by a griffin (v. line 679). In memory of this he made a griffin part of the heraldic device on his shield.

**233.** Seistan was on the S.W. border of Afghanistan.

**237-41.** Notice the effect of these successive lines beginning on the same word. This is a frequent device with Tennyson, who, however, uses much more emphatic words. Compare the lines where Galahad relates how he saw the Holy Grail:

Fainter by day, but always in the night  
Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd Marsh  
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top  
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below  
Blood-red.

Cf. lines 440-2, 516-9, 802-6.

**237.** 'And with mý | great name | ^ fénce | that weak | old mán'.  
fence, 'defend'.

**243-8.** Rustum is moved only by a taunt, viz., that he is content to rest on his laurels, and is even afraid to risk losing his fame by a defeat. In the *Shah Nameh* the wily Gudurz suggests that Rustum is afraid; but there is nothing like the subtlety of this taunt.

**257. In plain arms.** Rustum would not wear his customary armour, which was decorated (viz., on the shield, with a figure of the griffin which rescued him when he was exposed in childhood); thus he would not be recognised.

**267. helm,** archaic for 'helmet'.

**268. spíne,** a metal spike.

**269.** Epic repetition.

**270. Ruksh,** or Rakush, 'whose name, being interpreted, meaneth the lightning'. According to the *Shah Nameh*, the young Rustum had been provided with the huge mace of Zál's father, the great Sám, and asked for a steed of corresponding power. None of the many excellent horses of Zal would satisfy him, but at last he saw a fine mare followed by a colt with chest and shoulders of remarkable power, 'whose bright and

glossy coat was dappled o'er like blossoms of the rose upon a saffron lawn'. The mare had killed all who attempted to capture the colt, but Rustum succeeded in noosing the Ruksh and killing the mare. The animal was difficult to break, but once mounted 'the rose-coloured steed bore him along like unto the wind'.

271. at heel, 'close behind'.

275. a colt, in apposition with *whom*.

277. *dight*, archaic for 'adorned, arrayed'; cf. Milton, *Il Penseroso*, 'storied windows richly dight'. *Dight*, from O.E. *dihtan*, should be the infinitive form, the participle being *dighted*.

278. *ground*, a term in heraldry practically equivalent to 'background'. From the primary meaning of *ground* as 'that which supports, i.e., a foundation or base', naturally comes the secondary meaning of 'background, i.e., the basis on which some work is carried out', and with reference to textile materials that part of the cloth which is of uniform colour and on which the figures are worked.

288. *tale*, 'number' (that which is counted, or told). Cf. Macaulay *Horatius*:

And now hath every city  
Sent up her tale of men.

(O.E. *tal*, 'a number'; 'a narrative' was *talū*.)

The members who count when divisions are taken in the House of Commons are still called 'tellers'.

290. *pale*, with suspense.

It is noticeable how by these three similes Arnold, in true Homeric fashion, holds the action in suspense at a critical moment, and one where the minds of the actors are in suspense. 'The Bahrein diver was originally an ordinary fisher' (see note to l. 114), but Arnold determined to orientalise his similes lest they should cause incongruity if Western in tone.

293. *swath*, a line or row of grass or grain mown and thrown together by the sweeps of a scythe; or the passage so cut. (O.E., *swæd* or *swadu*, a track. Skeat suggests that the earliest meaning may have been a 'slice'. There is another *swathe* from O.E. *swadu*, a band or bandage.)

296. *stubble*, the lower ends of stalks of corn left standing in the ground after the crop has been cut.

304. *blackened* with the fuel.

305. at cock-crow, at dawn.

306. *flowers*. 'To flower' is usually an intransitive verb 'to burst out into flower'. Here it is transitive, 'makes flowers on . . .'. This phenomenon, which is, of course, familiar to Western readers, is caused by the moisture in the atmosphere of a warm room being condensed on the cold glass window panes. When the external temperature is below

freezing point this condensed moisture is frozen on the window panes in various beautiful designs, many of which resemble flowers.

**Whitened**, a proleptic use; the adjective is applied in anticipation before it is strictly true. The panes are only whitened when the moisture has been frozen. *Cf.* Keats, *Isabella*:

So these two brothers with their murdered man  
Rode past fair Florence.

*i.e.*, the man whom they were about to murder. The action is vividly imagined as already done. *See* also line 789.

**310. defying forth**, elliptic, 'defying and challenging to come forth'.

**314. like some young cypress.** This comparison is frequent in the *Shah Nameh*, *e.g.*, Rustum's description of Sohrab, 'In stature perfect, as the cypress tree'; and, again, Súdaveh speaking to Saiáwush praises 'That cypress form replete with grace'. (Atkinson's translation, pp. 132 and 146.) Elsewhere, *e.g.*, in the description of Tahmineh, the same phrase is used. The cypress in Greek, and so in English, poetry is traditionally associated with sorrow and death; but in Asia it is symbolic of joy and gladness.

**328. Never was that field lost.** 'Field' by metonymy for the fight that was fought upon it.

**330. Be governed**, *i.e.*, by prudence.

**331. 'To Ír | an ^ | and bé | as my sôn | to mé'.**

The second ictus or metrical stress is only an imaginary beat, falling during the pause after *Iran*. The superiority of this scansion over 'To Ír | an and | be ás | my sôn | to mé' is obvious, since in the latter *and* and *as* cannot take an accent, whereas *be* ought to be accented.

**336. planted.** The use of this word suggests the solid strength of Rustum; he stood as firmly as a mighty tree or a tower.

**337. Sole.** alone; *cf.* l. 563, and *Thyrsis*, 192, 'and me thou leavest here Sole in these fields!'. Notice the emphasis given by the metrical movement; *sole* is a monosyllabic foot (with pause before and after) on which the voice must linger.

**345. askance**, *i.e.*, with suspicion; literally, obliquely, out of the corner of the eye.

**347-63.** Arnold is careful to give a motive for Rustum's refusal; no reason is given by Firdausi.

**347. I muse**, poetic for 'I wonder'; *cf.* *Macbeth*, III., iv., 85. [Probably from Lat. *mussare*, 'to mumble, be in uncertainty'.]  
**fox**, *i.e.*, youth with the reputed qualities of the fox, *viz.*, cunning.

**377-8.** Epic repetition; *cf.* 406-7, 'sharp rang . . . rang sharp'.

**379. on his feet.** Note the full significance of these three words:

Sohrab is no longer kneeling and suppliant, but has been roused by the taunt.

383. *were*, 'would be'; subjunctive used conditionally.

385. *dread* = 'dreadful'. The verb *dread* which now forms its pret. and participle by adding *ed*. was originally strong.

387-97. This belief in an unchanging destiny is peculiarly in place in an Oriental poem. Its fatalistic tone will need no further comment for those who are familiar with the ideas of Karma and Kismet. Cf. lines 708-15, 725, 773-4.

394-5. Epic repetition.

397. *the event*, 'the result, or issue'; cf. *Hamlet*, iv., iv., 41, 'thinking too precisely on the event'.

399. 'His spéar, | ^ dówn | from the shóuld | er dówn | it cáme'. Notice the emphatic monosyllabic foot, which makes 'the sound an echo to the sense'.

400. The similitude is hardly exact. The likeness is at most only in the speed of the descent, and even in this respect is not remarkably striking.

402. ' ^ Dróps | like a plúm | met . . .'. Cf. 399 note.

408. *which none but he could wield*. Since *but* is a preposition, strict grammar requires *him* instead of *he*. The nominative is used also by Macaulay: 'Which none but he can wield'. (*Horatius*.)

416. *and struck*. This is a continuation from lines 408-9.

428. Cf. 376-8.

435. *hollow roar*. From the general meaning of 'without body *hollow*, as applied to sound, comes to mean weak or not full-toned. Cf. l. 666, 'with a hollow voice he spake'.

452. *autumn star*. Sirius, the dog-star, was in the ascendant during the hottest part of summer (the Dog Days), and was in astrology connected with fevers; but it can hardly be called 'autumn star'. It is noted for its brightness.

457. Notice how the irregular metre expresses Rustum's choking passion.

' ^ Gírl | ^ ním | ble with thy féet | ^ nót | with thy hánds'. The principle of the sound seeming an echo to the sense is skillfully expressed and exemplified in Pope's *Essay on Criticism*:

But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,  
The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar:  
When Ajax strives some rock's huge weight to throw,  
The line too labours, and the words move slow.

458. *Cur'd minion*, cf. *Othello*, i., ii., 68, 'the curled darlings of nation'; the expression conveys the idea of effeminate elegance.













